



The Byzantine Catholic
Metropolitan Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

Office of the Archbishop

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March 17, 2020

CHRIST IS AMONG US! HE IS AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!

Byzantine Catholic Faithful traditionally greet one another with the above powerful proclamation of our firm belief that Christ is present with us always and everywhere, in particular in receiving His Most Holy Body and Blood in the Eucharist. We can be assured of this regardless of anything we face, whether it is something that brings us great joy or something that poses a threat to us, like the Coronavirus spreading throughout the world. My prayers are with those who are affected by this virus, especially those who have lost loved ones.

I join my voice, together with the other bishops and government authorities to urge calm in this time of crisis. Now is the time to show just how strong we are in faith and in deeds. We are facing unprecedented challenges, but together we will meet them and emerge stronger.

I urge all of our clergy and faithful to diligently take all measures in their personal and communal lives to protect themselves and others from the spread of this virus. I encourage everyone to follow the directives of your local authorities for your own safety as well as for the safety of those around you.

With regard to Liturgical Worship in our Churches, following the new national guidelines issued on March 16, 2020 to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people, effective immediately, all public Liturgical celebrations are being suspended until further notice. This includes the Sunday Divine Liturgy, Lenten Services and Holy Days. The faithful of the Archeparchy are dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday and Holy Day Divine Liturgies, but you should continue to keep holy the Lord's Day through prayer and support of those in need in your Church.

There are ample parishes that "live stream" and radio broadcast of Byzantine Divine Services. You are encouraged to tune in to one of them. The times are listed on the attached sheet. In addition, all Religious Education programs as well as parish socials and Lenten dinners/fish fries that are open to the public should be canceled. Carry-out is permitted.

Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may be celebrated with only the immediate family present. People who are at high risk are encouraged not to attend. Confessions should be heard if possible with a screen and good ventilation. The priests will celebrate Eucharistic services in private for their people where already scheduled. Because of the emergency, the priest is permitted to celebrate even if no one is in attendance. Priests are authorized to combine prayers for previously committed Liturgy stipends, or reschedule the date and time.

We commend all the faithful of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh to the Protection of the Theotokos as we continue to pray for a speedy end to this outbreak.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ William C. Skurla

Most Reverend William C. Skurla, D.D.
Metropolitan Archbishop of Pittsburgh